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Mainstreaming Strategies, Outcomes, and Interventions for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the mainstreaming strategies, outcomes, and interventions in education for students with special educational needs (SEN) in certain Public Schools, Prince George's County, Maryland, United States of America (USA) during school year 2023-2024. This research had used qualitative phenomenological design. There were 15 participants (10 general education and 5 special education teachers) selected through purposive sampling technique who were interviewed using the researcher-made semi-structured questionnaire that contained five (5) open-ended questions, in English language, about the teacher participants perceptions of their collaboration in mainstreaming strategies, outcomes, and interventions in education for students with special educational needs (SEN). Data gathered were subjected to thematic analysis. The participants identified the following primary mainstreaming strategies for learners with special needs: (1) Collaborative Teaching Approaches, (2) Individualized Instruction Plans, (3) Use of Assistive Technologies, and (4) Peer Support Systems. These strategies were seen to result in: (1) Improved Academic Performance, (2) Enhanced Social Integration and Peer Relationships, and (3) Greater Self-Confidence and Independence. Key challenges in implementation included: (1) Insufficient Resources and Support, (2) Lack of Professional Development, and (3) Collaboration and Communication Barriers. Suggested interventions were: (1) Increased Resource Allocation, (2) Enhanced Professional Development, and (3) Structured Collaborative Planning. Parental involvement was also emphasized through: (1) Enhanced Communication and Collaboration, (2) Reinforcement of Educational Practices at Home, and (3) Social and Emotional Support. It is concluded that collaboration among educators, parents, and support systems is crucial for fostering an environment in which SEN learners can excel academically and socially.

INTRODUCTION

The progression of inclusive education in recent decades has brought about a notable change in how cultures address the education of individuals with special educational needs (SEN). Traditionally, individuals with impairments were frequently isolated from their peers and received education in distinct schools or classes. This seclusion served as both a tangible obstacle and a symbolic representation, strengthening societal biases and restricting educational prospects for individuals with special educational needs (Kirby, 2017). Nevertheless, with the increasing recognition and admiration for diversity and equality, there has been a corresponding rise in the dedication to providing inclusive education. This dedication is emphasized by multiple legislation and policy frameworks created to safeguard the rights of students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States has played a crucial role in promoting the education of kids with disabilities in the least restrictive setting feasible. The mandates set forth by IDEA regarding free and adequate public education, individualized education plans (IEP), and the idea of the least restrictive environment (LRE) have facilitated the adoption of more inclusive educational methods. One of the most pivotal approaches

to achieving this inclusivity is through mainstreaming strategies. Mainstreaming strategies encompass educational methodologies that strive to integrate students with special educational needs (SEN) into regular education settings. This integration enables individuals with disabilities to engage in the same activities and curriculum as others without disabilities, to the maximum extent possible (Karim, 2023). These strategies are based on the concepts of equality, inclusivity, and the right to a suitable education for all students, regardless of their capabilities or impairments. Mainstreaming initiatives aim to integrate students with and without SEN, with the goal of breaking down the historical obstacles that have kept these groups separate.

Although these techniques aim to promote diversity and ensure equal educational opportunities, they also pose certain problems throughout their implementation. Effective mainstreaming necessitates a holistic approach that encompasses not just the physical integration of students but also the fulfillment of their academic, social, and emotional requirements. Well-executed mainstreaming initiatives have the potential to yield substantial advantages, such as greater academic achievement and improved social integration for students with special educational needs

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(SEN) (Brussino, 2020). These results are advantageous not only for the children with special educational needs, but also enhance the overall inclusivity and empathy of the student body. However, there are challenges that must be overcome to achieve successful integration into the mainstream. Teachers encounter a multitude of obstacles when it comes to modifying instructional approaches, educational content, and physical learning spaces to cater to the varying requirements of their pupils. Katz (2015) claims that the efficacy of mainstreaming initiatives can be impacted by several factors, such as the readiness of teachers, the accessibility of resources, and the level of support from parents and the broader community. In addition, the social interactions within regular classrooms might create difficulties for fully including students with special educational needs (SEN), requiring the implementation of techniques to foster comprehension and acceptance among all students. The inclusive education debate has had several major disagreements. The quality of teacher training is paramount. Teachers are vital to mainstreaming, but many are unprepared to meet the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) in a conventional classroom. Lack of training may hinder the students' academic and social success by preventing inclusive practices. Mainstreaming programs also depend on school resource allocation. Inclusion projects may fail without skilled staff, flexible teaching materials, and accessible infrastructure. The ratio of pupils to teachers and the integration of children with special educational needs (SEN) can also affect classroom inclusivity and the learning atmosphere. Mainstreaming initiatives require parental involvement. Parent and caregiver involvement and collaboration can greatly improve attempts to integrate special education (SEN) children into mainstream education. Their involvement and partnership with schools may vary substantially. The contentions reveal important gaps in our knowledge on the practical implementation of these mainstreaming strategies, their effectiveness, and the specific difficulties that educators encounter. Also, a significant portion of the current body of research primarily examines quantitative results, such as academic performance measurements, without thoroughly exploring the qualitative dimensions of inclusion.

Hence, this study is conceived to explore the primary mainstreaming strategies used in inclusive education for learners with special educational needs, how these mainstreaming strategies impact the academic and social outcomes of learners with special educational needs within inclusive settings, the challenges educators face in implementing mainstreaming strategies for successful inclusion, the interventions that has to be made to address the such challenges, and determine the role of parental involvement in supporting mainstreaming strategies to improve students with SEN's educational experiences and outcomes by promoting an inclusive school system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education has emerged as a global need to

guarantee equitable learning opportunities for all students, especially those with special educational needs (SEN). Theoretical evolution centers on the transition from deficit-based perspectives of disability to empowerment-focused frameworks that highlight social context and variety. The Social Model of Disability is particularly influential as it reframes disability from a personal or medical concern to a result of environmental and attitudinal obstacles. Owens (2015) had stated that the debilitating experience is not intrinsically due to impairments but is generated by systemic barriers that restrict access, participation, and inclusion. This concept encourages educators and institutions to acknowledge their responsibilities in creating more accessible learning environments. Keagan (2022) emphasizes that the Social Model advocates for instructors to reconfigure their practices by eliminating institutional and instructional impediments. By doing so, they enable children with special educational needs to engage fully in school life, thereby fostering equity, autonomy, and agency. A straightforward modification, such as increasing text size for a visually challenged student, illustrates that the learning environment rather than the disability should modify to promote inclusion. The Social Model of Disability establishes a vital ideological basis, whereas Universal Design for Learning (UDL) presents a pragmatic educational framework for fostering inclusivity. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) acknowledges student heterogeneity as standard rather than atypical. This methodology advocates three fundamental principles: offering diverse means of representation, facilitating action and expression, and fostering engagement. (Corcoran, 2022). These principles correspond with the brain's neural networks that govern cognition, emotion, and executive functioning, thus guaranteeing that instructional tactics address a range of learning requirements (Pradeep *et al.*, 2024). On one hand, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States ensures that students with disabilities are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Lipkin *et al.*, 2015). The LRE stipulates that the learners with special educational needs, when suitable, should be educated alongside their non-disabled counterparts. At the core of IDEA's execution are Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), which include customized objectives, supports, and instructional modifications to facilitate student achievement in general education environments (Yell, 2020). IDEA functions under a compliance-focused framework, whereas the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by the United Nations in 2006, perceives inclusive education as a fundamental human right (Broderick, 2018). Article 24 of the CRPD advocates for a comprehensive reform of educational systems to accommodate diversity, necessitating modifications in physical accessibility, pedagogy, curricula, and societal perceptions. IDEA and CRPD collectively embody both procedural and philosophical commitments to inclusion, forming a twin

foundation for global mainstreaming initiatives. In inclusive educational environments, mainstreaming denotes the incorporation of students with special educational needs into general education classrooms. Effective mainstreaming solutions originate from and implement the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the Social Model of Disability. This encompasses the implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), differentiated instruction, co-teaching methods, peer-assisted learning, and the judicious application of assistive technologies. Individualized instruction Programs (IEPs) serve as practical frameworks to tailor instruction, delineating the adjustments and modifications required for children with special educational needs (SEN) to succeed academically and socially (Williams, 2022). Co-teaching, in which general and special education teachers jointly plan and implement instruction, has demonstrated improvements in learning outcomes and the promotion of inclusivity by utilizing the knowledge of both educators (Iacono, 2023; Spörer *et al.*, 2021). Peer tutoring and cooperative learning practices enhance academic performance while promoting social connection and mutual comprehension among diverse learners (Upadhyay, 2017). Technological instruments, like text-to-speech software, communication devices, and interactive whiteboards, enhance engagement and accessibility for students with special educational needs (Devi & Sarkar, 2019). Empirical research robustly demonstrates the effectiveness of mainstreaming in enhancing both academic and social results for students with special educational needs. Scharenberg *et al.* (2019) discovered that students with special educational needs in inclusive settings exhibited markedly superior performance in reading and mathematics compared to their peers in segregated situations. These enhancements are frequently ascribed to elevated expectations and access to a more extensive, rigorous curriculum. Moreover, inclusion cultivates essential social competencies including communication, collaboration, and resilience. Ralić and Marković (2024) assert that inclusive classrooms improve peer connections and foster the emotional well-being of students with special educational needs (SEN). In addition to personal benefits, inclusive education enhances the whole classroom environment by fostering empathy, diversity, and mutual respect among all students (Makweya & Sepadi, 2025). Notwithstanding these advantages, educators often face obstacles to the efficient execution of mainstreaming tactics. Primary challenges encompass restricted finance, poor professional development, insufficient teaching materials, and the labor-intensive process of curriculum differentiation (Okongo, 2015; Zigmond & Kloo, 2017). Educators frequently express feelings of inadequacy in addressing the requirements of diverse learners, attributed to deficiencies in pre-service preparation and insufficient ongoing support (Majoko, 2019; Mason-Williams *et al.*, 2020). Classroom management can be challenging, especially when accommodating the needs of students

with diverse abilities and learning styles (Shareefa *et al.*, 2019). Attitudinal barriers exacerbate implementation challenges, as unfavorable attitudes of disability among educators or peers can obstruct inclusion and restrict student potential (Tometten *et al.*, 2021; Dell’Anna *et al.*, 2021). The efficacy of mainstreaming, consequently, depends on the enhancement of professional competencies, cultural evolution, and systemic assistance. A vital yet often neglected factor in achieving mainstreaming success is parental engagement. Studies demonstrate that parental involvement in their child's education—via participation in IEP meetings, home support, and advocacy—substantially improves the effectiveness of inclusive practices (Hirano & Rowe, 2016; Lendrum *et al.*, 2018). Collaboration between families and schools cultivates uniformity in learning goals and methodologies, which is essential for students with Special Educational Needs who depend on organized, predictable surroundings (Jigyel *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, involved parents frequently act as essential proponents for required adjustments, enhancing a more adaptive and student-focused educational framework. To tackle the complex issues of mainstreaming, experts advocate for various approaches at the classroom, institutional, and policy levels. Professional development initiatives centered on inclusive pedagogy can provide educators with techniques for differentiation, collaboration, and assessment (Navarro *et al.*, 2016). Investment in assistive technologies and support people guarantees that students obtain the necessary tools and direction for complete participation (Marienko *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, collaborations with community organizations can enhance learning outside the classroom and offer practical assistance for inclusive objectives (Bryan *et al.*, 2020). These initiatives signify proactive measures aimed at rendering inclusive education both durable and effective.

Although the literature comprehensively outlines theoretical frameworks, policy environments, and practical tactics that guide inclusive education, a notable deficiency persists in context-specific evaluations of mainstreaming activities within local school districts in the United States. Despite the vast global debate, empirical research on the operationalization of mainstreaming techniques in certain public schools in Maryland, United States of America, during school year 2023–2024, remains sparse. Localized data regarding the tactics utilized, their effects on academic and social results, the problems encountered by educators, the involvement of parents, and the treatments being executed are also underexplored. This disparity is significant, as educational policies and practices frequently vary across districts based on demographic, cultural, and resource factors. Hence, this study answers the following questions: (1) What are the primary mainstreaming strategies used in inclusive education for learners with special educational needs? (2) How do these mainstreaming strategies impact the academic and social outcomes of learners with special educational needs within inclusive settings? (3) What challenges do

educators face in implementing mainstreaming strategies for successful inclusion? (4) What interventions are to be made to address the challenges educators face in implementing mainstreaming strategies for successful inclusion? (5) What role does parental involvement play in supporting mainstreaming strategies?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a qualitative phenomenological technique to explore the fifteen (15) purposively-selected teacher participants' experiences in the implementation of the mainstreaming practices for students with special educational needs (SEN) integrated into regular classroom settings. Tuffour (2017) defines phenomenology as a method that captures the essence of people's experiences through their subjective interpretations and meanings. A semi-structured interview guide with five open-ended questions was created and used to collect holistic data. All purposively-selected participants were oriented about the nature and purpose of the study and they gave informed consent before the interviews were conducted to ensure their voluntary involvement, protection of their rights, and understanding of the study. Face-to-face one-on-one interviews that lasted about an hour and 30 mins were performed to foster in-depth discussion. Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret the data gathered. This analytical procedure followed Xu and Zammit (2020)'s cyclical cycle of data transcription, systematic coding, and theme creation. This study concludes with a narrative analysis that intricately weaves together the findings with relevant literature to provide a deep understanding of the teachers' collaborative experiences in implementing the mainstreaming strategies, outcomes, and interventions for the students with SEN.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants' Views About the Primary Mainstreaming Strategies Used in Inclusive Education for Learners with

Special Educational Needs

Theme 1: Collaborative Teaching Approaches

Team Collaborative Teaching Approaches are essential strategies in inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN), promoting cooperation between general and special education instructors. Through co-teaching, educators amalgamate their skills to tailor training, accommodate multiple needs, and foster inclusive environments devoid of division. "Working with a SPED teacher helps me address individual learning needs more effectively (P3)." Another explained, "Collaboration encourages shared problem-solving and creative strategies (P7)." A third reflected, "It reduces isolation because we face challenges together (P11)." One participant emphasized, "Co-teaching balances the workload between us." Finally, a teacher stated, "It boosts my confidence in handling students with special needs (P12)." Research underscores advantages of collaboration including increased academic engagement,

elevated accomplishment, and greater social skills, promoting acceptance and belonging (Ruijuan *et al.*, 2023; Eden *et al.*, 2024). Successful collaboration necessitates continuous professional development in communication, role-sharing, and differentiated education (Esposito, 2023). This implies that shared planning time, sufficient resources, and access to assistive technologies enhance implementation. Administrative assistance via scheduling and resource distribution guarantees unified instructional execution.

Theme 2: Individualized Instruction Plans

Support Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are central to inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN), ensuring that instruction is tailored to each student's strengths, needs, and challenges. They provide clear goals, accommodations, and teaching strategies that promote success in mainstream classrooms. Participants in the study highlighted IEPs as a cornerstone of inclusion. One shared, "IEPs have transformed our approach, leading to greater engagement, confidence, and academic performance" (P1). Another emphasized, "They allow us to target exactly what each student needs to succeed" (P2). A third reflected, "Essential in addressing the vast diversity of needs in mainstream classes" (P5). One participant noted, "Their flexibility lets us adapt strategies to evolving student needs" (P6), while another added, "Collaboration with general education teachers ensures IEPs are seamlessly applied" (P8). These data confirm that meticulously designed IEPs enhance academic performance and promote social engagement. Omoso and Villarente (2024) discovered that IEPs reconcile disparities between varied learner requirements and the conventional curriculum, hence augmenting academic and social integration. Lindberg *et al.* (2021) emphasized that effective implementation necessitates collaboration among educators, administrators, and families, as well as access to resources, training, and assistive technologies. IEPs are fundamental to equitable, inclusive education, facilitating the academic and social success of learners with SEN via ongoing enhancement, collaboration, and dedicated resources.

Theme 3: Use of Assistive Technologies

The use of assistive technologies is a vital strategy in mainstreaming learners with special educational needs (SEN), enabling them to access the curriculum, participate in activities, and succeed alongside peers. These tools ranging from communication devices to adaptive software address challenges in mobility, communication, reading, writing, and information processing. Participants affirmed their transformative impact. "Using assistive technology in our classrooms has changed the game... students can interact with content on their terms" (P1). One noted, "Audiobooks and speech-to-text tools empower those who struggle with traditional methods" (P3), while another emphasized, "They enhance performance and foster confidence and

community” (P6). Teachers have seen learners “take on challenges they might have avoided” (P8) and ensure “equal chances to achieve” (P10). Others stressed that these devices “give tailored access to resources” (P11), are “crucial, not optional” (P13), and “enable participation in ways previously unimaginable” (P14). These experiences demonstrate that assistive technology enhance academic performance and facilitate social inclusion. Hoogerwerf (2021) emphasized their function in reconciling learner capabilities with curriculum requirements, whereas Chaidi (2021) discovered that their efficient integration improves academic performance and self-esteem. Effective implementation necessitates sufficient financing, continuous support, and professional development for educators, in addition to engagement with parents and specialists to guarantee consistent use both at school and at home. Ultimately, assistive technologies are essential for establishing inclusive classrooms that enable SEN learners to achieve their maximum academic and social potential.

Theme 4: Peer Support Systems

Peer support systems are an important strategy in mainstreaming learners with special educational needs (SEN), using the classroom’s natural social structures to promote inclusion, academic growth, and social development (Vetoniemi & Kärnä, 2021). These include buddy systems, cooperative learning groups, and peer mentoring, where students with and without SEN work together to build empathy, mutual understanding, and shared responsibility. Participants emphasized their positive impact: “All children now feel appreciated and included... the peer support and social contacts really benefit students with SEN” (P2). “Buddy systems help pupils develop empathy and a sense of responsibility” (P4), while others observed that they “improve social skills and self-esteem” (P7) and “create a win-win scenario for both SEN students and their peers” (P9). Cooperative learning allows SEN students to “showcase their abilities” (P10) and promotes independence and self-worth (P12). Teachers highlighted that peer networks “foster a welcoming climate where differences are celebrated” (P13) and “build a community of learners who support one another” (P15). These observations correspond with the findings of Juvonen *et al.* (2019) and Muqoddam & Hendriani (2020), which indicate that peer support enhances the sense of belonging among SEN kids, mitigates isolation, and fosters leadership and inclusion skills among peers. Successful peer support necessitates meticulous planning, educator training, and continuous supervision to guarantee advantages for all pupils. When well executed, these strategies enhance academic achievement, promote social integration, and foster a compassionate, inclusive educational atmosphere.

Participants’ Views on the Impact of Mainstreaming Strategies on the Academic and Social Outcomes of the Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Theme 1: Improved Academic Performance

Academic achievement and progress are key indicators of successful mainstreaming for learners with special educational needs (SEN), as inclusive teaching, individualized instruction, and targeted support enable them to thrive alongside peers. Insights from participants show these strategies lead to improved skills, motivation, and consistency: “Mainstreaming has made a significant difference... reading, writing, and math skills have improved” (P1); “students are more driven to participate in class and finish homework” (P3); and “specialized methods ensure they thrive in areas they once struggled” (P5). Others noted that high expectations paired with proper support yield “consistent and measurable progress” (P7) and that focusing on strengths benefits the whole class (P9). Access to advanced coursework and collaborative projects “improves critical thinking and problem-solving” (P11), while specialized attention in inclusive settings “greatly aids academic achievement” (P13) and fosters a passion for learning (P14). These reflections support findings by Senadza *et al.* (2019) and Dalgaard *et al.* (2022) that mainstreaming through differentiated instruction, collaboration, and assistive technology enables SEN learners to meet or exceed academic benchmarks. For sustained success, schools must ensure resource availability, ongoing teacher training, and a culture of high expectations to maximize the academic potential of all learners.

Theme 2: Enhanced Social Integration and Peer Relationship

Enhanced social integration and peer relationships are vital outcomes of mainstreaming learners with special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive settings, as these approaches strengthen social skills, build friendships, and promote a sense of belonging (Dell’Anna *et al.*, 2021). Participants shared how inclusive practices foster meaningful connections: “SEN students forge closer bonds with peers, which is essential to their social growth and mental health” (P2); “inclusive classrooms foster friendships and a sense of belonging” (P4); and “peer mentoring builds confidence in social interactions” (P6). Others noted that SEN learners are now “engaged participants... with more enduring peer relationships” (P8), benefit from “vital social skills through observing appropriate behaviors” (P10), and thrive in “a culture of acceptance and understanding” (P11). Social integration was described as “one of mainstreaming’s most important outcomes” (P13) and as fostering “stronger, more encouraging peer relationships based on empathy and respect” (P15). These reflections align with findings by Woodgate *et al.* (2020), Fernandez-Villardón *et al.* (2020), and Tahira *et al.* (2023) that inclusive environments, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring significantly improve social outcomes for SEN learners. For impact to be sustained, schools must intentionally design activities that encourage interaction, provide teachers with the tools to support social engagement, and cultivate a

school culture where all students actively participate in community life.

Theme 3: Development of Self-Confidence and Independence

The development of self-confidence and independence is a key outcome of mainstreaming strategies for learners with special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive education settings, as these approaches empower students to take ownership of their learning, embrace challenges, and build essential life skills. Participants emphasized that inclusive environments encourage students to step out of their comfort zones: “SEN kids gain confidence as they engage more in classroom activities, seeing themselves as capable learners” (P3); “inclusive settings push students to take on challenges they might have avoided in segregated environments” (P5); and “navigating the same hurdles as peers fosters reliance on their own abilities” (P7). Others observed that inclusive strategies “cultivate self-belief leading to greater independence” (P9), encourage “greater ownership over education and more risk-taking” (P10), and create “a sense of security that boosts confidence” (P12). Teachers also noted that students “begin to see themselves as peers in the classroom, capable of the same goals” (P13), and that mainstreaming develops “life skills needed beyond academics” (P15). These experiences align with Burke *et al.* (2020), who emphasize that the integration of general education fosters self-determination, and Shogren *et al.* (2021), who associate inclusive involvement with enhanced self-confidence and independence. Maintaining these advancements necessitates that school leaders cultivate a culture of empowerment, provide educators with methods to enhance autonomy, and create opportunities for students to assume leadership roles and engage in decision-making, thereby ensuring their preparedness for success both within and outside the classroom.

Participants’ Views about the Challenges that Educators Face in Implementing Mainstreaming Strategies for Successful Inclusion.

Theme 1: Insufficient Resources and Support

Insufficient resources and support remain a major challenge in implementing mainstreaming strategies for the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN), as noted by both general and special education teachers. Participants described struggling to meet diverse needs due to limitations in funding, manpower, and materials: “Our greatest obstacle is a shortage of resources... we need more specialized materials, assistive technologies, and support workers” (P1); “without sufficient money, we often settle for less than ideal circumstances” (P3); and “a shortage of aides and specialists affects both academic performance and classroom climate” (P5). Others stressed that “lack of funding forces sacrifices in the quality of education” (P7), that greater achievements “could be possible with more resources” (P9), and that educators are “overextended,

impacting not only SEN students but the entire class” (P11). These reflections corroborate the findings of Bryan *et al.* (2019) and Tahar *et al.* (2023), which associate effective inclusion with access to customized resources, assistive technologies, skilled personnel, and professional development. Overcoming this obstacle necessitates that school administrators obtain sufficient financing, allocate resources judiciously, and provide continuous professional development for educators to optimize the utilization of available tools. In the absence of coordinated support, schools will persist in encountering challenges in providing excellent, inclusive education that addresses the diverse needs of SEN learners.

Theme 2: Professional Development Deficits

The Professional development deficits emerged as a major challenge in implementing mainstreaming strategies for the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN). Both general and special education teachers noted that without sufficient training, they often feel unprepared to address the diverse needs of students. The lack of such opportunities leaves some teachers “lacking confidence in applying inclusive practices” (P8) and dissatisfied with generic sessions “that don’t address unique classroom challenges” (P10). Participants also highlighted that inadequate professional development “affects job satisfaction and contributes to burnout” (P12) and called for “practical instruction, group projects, and real-world application” (P14), emphasizing the need for “training that contains techniques we can implement right away” (P15). These insights align with Schwab (2020) and Sancar (2021), who underscore that effective inclusive education depends on ongoing, hands-on, and practice-specific professional development to enhance teacher competence and confidence. Addressing this gap requires school leaders to provide consistent, high-quality training tailored to inclusive education, ensuring teachers are equipped with immediately applicable strategies that evolve with the needs of students and the learning environment.

Theme 3: Collaboration and Communication Barriers

Collaboration and communication barriers emerged as a critical challenge in implementing mainstreaming strategies for the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN). General and special education teachers emphasized that smooth cooperation among educators, support staff, and families is essential, yet often hindered by gaps in scheduling, role clarity, and consistent information-sharing. As one participant explained, “The absence of regular communication between general education and special education teachers is one of our main problems. Without frequent updates and discussions, it’s challenging to coordinate our efforts” (P1). Another noted, “Time restraints and scheduling issues limit dedicated planning time, which hinders effective implementation” (P3). Others pointed out that “barriers between educators and support personnel

can lead to miscommunication and uneven assistance” (P5) and that “families are sometimes left out of the communication loop, even though they are essential collaborators” (P7). These accounts align with Fodo (2020) and White (2020), who emphasize that strong collaborative relationships and organized communication among all stakeholders, including families, are essential for addressing the intricate needs of SEN learners. Overcoming these obstacles necessitates intentional administrative backing, including the organization of frequent collaborative planning meetings, the creation of established communication pathways, and the cultivation of a school culture that prioritizes teamwork and shared responsibility. This strategic emphasis can foster a more cohesive and inclusive environment in which SEN learners have consistent and well-coordinated help. Participants’ Views about the Interventions to be Made to Address the Challenges Educators Face in Implementing Mainstreaming Strategies for Successful Inclusion.

Theme 1: Increased Resource Allocation

Increased resource allocation was seen by teachers as one of the most vital interventions for implementing mainstreaming strategies and ensuring the successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN). Adequate funding, materials, and staffing enable inclusive environments where tailored support can be delivered effectively. Participants highlighted the impact of resource shortages and the transformative potential of increased provisions. “Increasing the resources at our disposal would be one of the most effective and quick actions,” noted one teacher, explaining that more funds would allow for the purchase of essential instructional materials and assistive technologies (P2). Another emphasized, “It would be really beneficial to have more support personnel, such as aides and specialists” (P4). Others stressed that resource allocation should also provide “the time and tools needed to develop and implement effective inclusive practices” (P6) and that investment in professional development ensures teachers “always have access to the newest techniques and resources” (P8). Participants agreed that boosting resources signals a genuine commitment to valuing the performance of SEN learners equally (P13) and that resources must be “accessible and allocated fairly” to meet the needs of all students (P15). This view is supported by Jones (2021), who notes that adequate funding and resources are critical to providing specialist staff, assistive technology, and professional learning, and by Qureshi (2020), who stresses equitable distribution. To realize these goals, advocacy for increased funding at state and local levels and strategic planning for targeted allocation particularly in professional development, classroom resources, and support staff are essential for strengthening inclusive education.

Theme 2: Enhanced Professional Development

Enhanced professional development emerged as a crucial

intervention for overcoming challenges in implementing mainstreaming strategies for learners with special educational needs (SEN). Teachers emphasized that ongoing, practical, and targeted training equips them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to address diverse needs in inclusive classrooms. “One of the most impactful interventions would be to provide more comprehensive and ongoing professional development focused specifically on inclusive education” (P1). Some admitted feeling unprepared due to a “lack of specific training” and called for tailored opportunities (P5), while others valued “collaborative workshops for both general and special education teachers” to strengthen skills and teamwork (P7). Participants also highlighted the importance of mastering differentiated instruction and assistive technologies (P9) and maintaining skills through “scheduled professional development seminars” (P11). These views align with Smith and Gillespie (2023), who note that effective professional development is continuous, collaborative, and directly linked to teachers’ work, and with Kubacka and D’Addio (2020), who found that inclusive-focused training improves teacher confidence and capability. Addressing this need requires deliberate investment in frequent, high-quality, and context-specific training, ensuring it is a sustained process with opportunities for collaborative learning and follow-up support to continually improve inclusive practices.

Theme 3: Structured Collaborative Planning

Structured collaborative planning is seen by educators as a vital intervention for effectively implementing mainstreaming strategies for students with special educational needs (SEN). Through scheduled meetings, general and special education teachers, along with support personnel, can jointly design, implement, and refine inclusive practices. “Organizing regular, structured meetings for collaborative planning would be one of the most beneficial strategies” (P2). Another shared, “Without scheduled planning time, we often work in silos, leading to inconsistent support” (P4). Others emphasized making it part of the weekly routine to “exchange ideas, create cohesive strategies, and respond quickly to challenges” (P6), while some noted that it “builds stronger ties among the teaching staff” (P8) and ensures “all educators are in agreement” (P10). Participants also stressed including specialists and support staff in planning sessions for “more thorough and efficient support” (P12) and highlighted that structured planning “helps us anticipate challenges and prepare proactively” (P13). These reflections align with Ruso (2020), who notes that organized collaboration strengthens co-teaching and inclusive practices, and Jortveit & Kovač (2022), who emphasize its role in ensuring consistent objectives and coordinated support. School leaders must allocate dedicated time, provide resources, and foster a culture of shared responsibility to make structured collaborative planning a consistent practice that strengthens inclusive education outcomes.

Participants' Views about the Role of Parental Involvement Play in Supporting Mainstreaming Strategies.

Theme 1: Enhanced Communication and Collaboration

Enhanced communication and collaboration between educators and parents are essential for the successful implementation of mainstreaming strategies for learners with special educational needs (SEN). Strong, ongoing relationships between schools and families ensure that students receive consistent support at home and in the classroom. When parents are informed and actively engaged, they can work with teachers to create a unified support system. Participants emphasized that open communication fosters trust, enables joint problem-solving, and allows for shared goal-setting to address each child's needs. As one teacher noted, "Parental engagement is essential. With open communication, we can work together to provide the best support" (P2). Others shared that regular updates help parents reinforce classroom practices at home (P10) and that parent input is invaluable in tailoring strategies to individual learners (P13). These reflections align with Jigyel (2019) and Roksa & Kinsley (2019), who highlight that strong school-family partnerships significantly improve academic and social outcomes for SEN students. To make this possible, school leadership must prioritize parental involvement through regular meetings, workshops, and accessible communication channels, while ensuring teachers have the tools and training to engage families effectively. By fostering these partnerships, schools can create a cohesive, well-coordinated support network that enhances inclusive education for all learners.

Theme 2: Reinforcement of Educational Practices at Home

Reinforcement of educational practices at home is a vital component of parental involvement in mainstreaming strategies for learners with special educational needs (SEN). Consistency between classroom instruction and at-home support ensures steady progress in both social and academic development. Participants emphasized that when parents mirror school strategies at home, students internalize lessons more effectively and gain confidence. As one noted, "A fundamental responsibility of parents is to reinforce at home the lessons taught in the classroom" (P1), while another added that this could include using assistive technology, practicing social skills, or helping with homework (P3). Teachers stressed that communication between home and school creates a seamless learning environment (P5) and that home reinforcement boosts both ability and confidence (P7). This aligns with Epstein (2019) and Yotyodying & Wild (2019), who found that parental reinforcement improves academic and social outcomes, especially for SEN students needing extra skill practice. To make this effective, teachers must provide clear guidance, resources, and regular updates, equipping parents to support learning at home. By fostering active

collaboration, schools and families can create a cohesive, supportive environment that strengthens the success of mainstreaming initiatives.

Theme 3: Social and Emotional Support

Structured Social and emotional support from parents is a fundamental element in ensuring the success of mainstreaming strategies for learners with special educational needs (SEN). When children feel secure, valued, and understood at home, they are more likely to approach the inclusive classroom with confidence and resilience. Participants emphasized that "for students with SEN, parental involvement in social and emotional support is essential" (P2) and that parents play a key role in helping their children develop the emotional strength to overcome challenges (P4). They also noted that this support fosters self-worth, enabling students to fully engage in school life (P6) and manage stress and anxiety more effectively (P8). Others highlighted how a secure emotional foundation at home encourages peer relationships (P10) and complements teachers' classroom efforts (P12). Parents' insights into their child's emotional state can guide educators in providing better academic and social support (P13), while empowering children to face challenges is equally vital (P15). Larcombe *et al.* (2019) and Mihalec-Adkins & Cooley (2020) confirm that strong familial social and emotional support is linked to improved academic outcomes, social competence, and self-esteem in SEN learners. To strengthen this partnership, schools should maintain open communication, provide resources, and work with parents to meet students' emotional needs. By fostering such collaboration, educators and families can create a nurturing environment that supports both the social-emotional and academic growth of every child in an inclusive setting.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the effective integration of learners with special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive environments relies on a comprehensive strategy that incorporates collaborative teaching, personalized instructional plans, assistive technologies, and peer support networks. These tactics boost academic performance while fostering social integration, self-confidence, and independence among SEN learners. Nevertheless, the report highlights ongoing issues, such as inadequate resources, restricted professional growth, and communication obstacles, which impede the complete achievement of inclusive objectives. Addressing these difficulties necessitates focused interventions, including enhanced resource allocation, ongoing and context-specific teacher training, and organized collaborative planning. Furthermore, parental involvement proved to be a vital facilitator of mainstreaming success, with good communication, reinforcement of learning at home, and regular social-emotional support substantially enhancing positive learner outcomes. The evidence indicates that collaboration among educators, parents, and support

systems is crucial for fostering an environment in which SEN learners can excel academically and socially. Advancing inclusive education necessitates a persistent commitment from all stakeholders, supported by sufficient resources, robust partnerships, and an inclusive culture that appreciates diversity and fosters equitable opportunities for all students.

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